



Department of Defense Fresh Produce Program

Trends in Local
Purchasing

2012-2013



Summary

Since 1995, the Food and Nutrition Service has worked with the Department of Defense (DoD) to supply fresh fruits and vegetables directly to schools in addition to their deliveries to military institutions. Through the Department of Defense Fresh Produce Program, the United States Department of Agriculture (USDA) has been able to offer schools a wider variety of fresh produce than what is available through other USDA Food purchases (formerly known as commodities). Advantages of the DoD Fresh Produce Program include stable produce pricing, consistent deliveries, emphasis on high quality, a large variety of produce items including fresh-cut options, seasonal locally grown options, and an easy-to-use ordering website with fund tracking (known as the FAAVORS catalog).

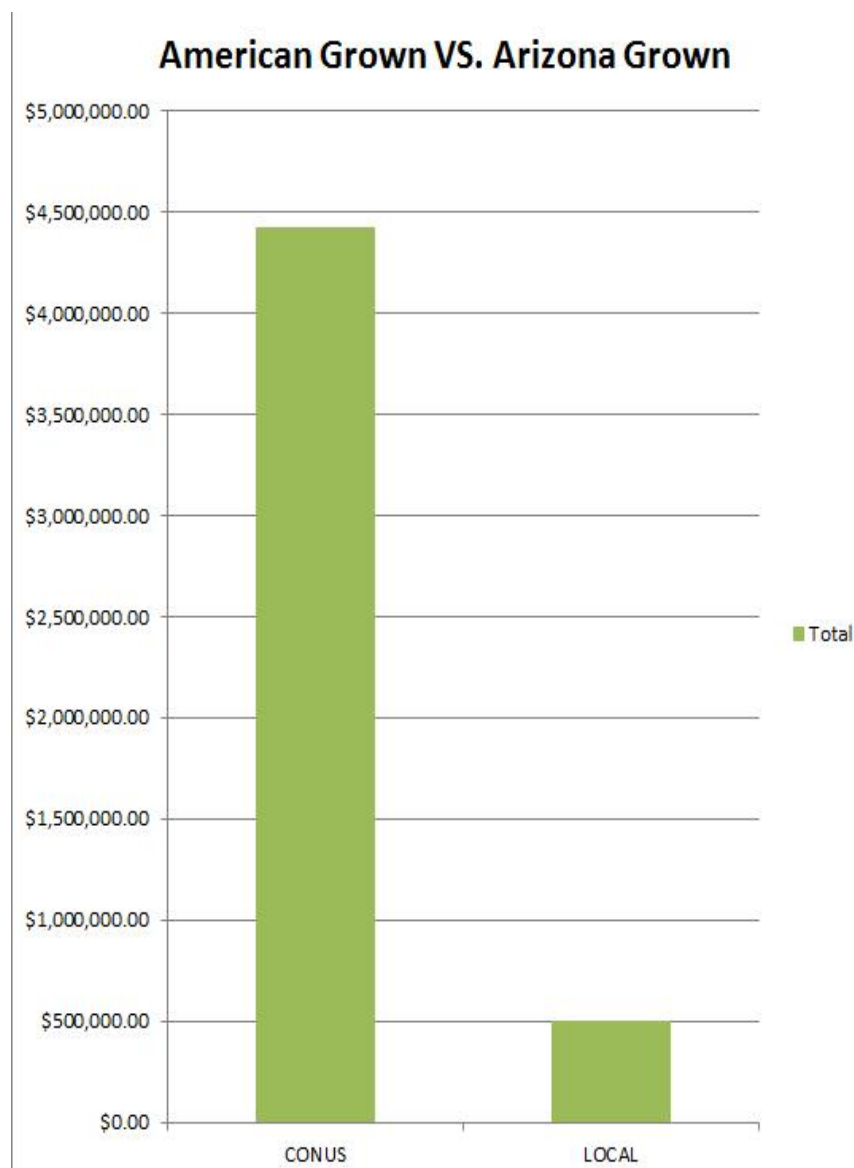
The DoD Fresh Produce Program is often one of the easiest ways to implement a Farm to School Program within a school district, by shifting the way a school district purchases produce. Implementing 'buy local' procurement practices in this program are simple because schools can access information on what is locally grown directly from the FAAVORS catalog. This system offers a streamlined approach to purchasing local products compared to purchasing through commercial or direct distribution channels. In school year 2013, Arizona participants on the DoD Fresh Produce Program were asked to spend 25% of their DoD entitlement dollars on items designated as 'locally grown' through the FAAVORS catalog. This report will feature trends in local purchasing through DoD Fresh Produce Program funding for school year 2013.

Key findings:

- Overall, school districts who participated in the DoD Fresh Produce Program spent, on average, 11% of their entitlement dollars on items designated as 'locally grown' using program funding.
- The most purchased items included fruits like apples, pears and strawberries.
- Of the items purchased in school year 2013, most schools purchased vegetable items that were designated as 'locally grown' like romaine lettuce, celery sticks, and broccoli florets.
- While each school district chooses to spend their DoD entitlement funds at various times of the year, the greatest frequency of local purchasing took place in late January through April.

Local Purchasing through the DoD Fresh Produce Program

The Health and Nutrition Services promotes the DoD Fresh Produce Program as one of the many options available to purchase local produce. This program is often thought of as the



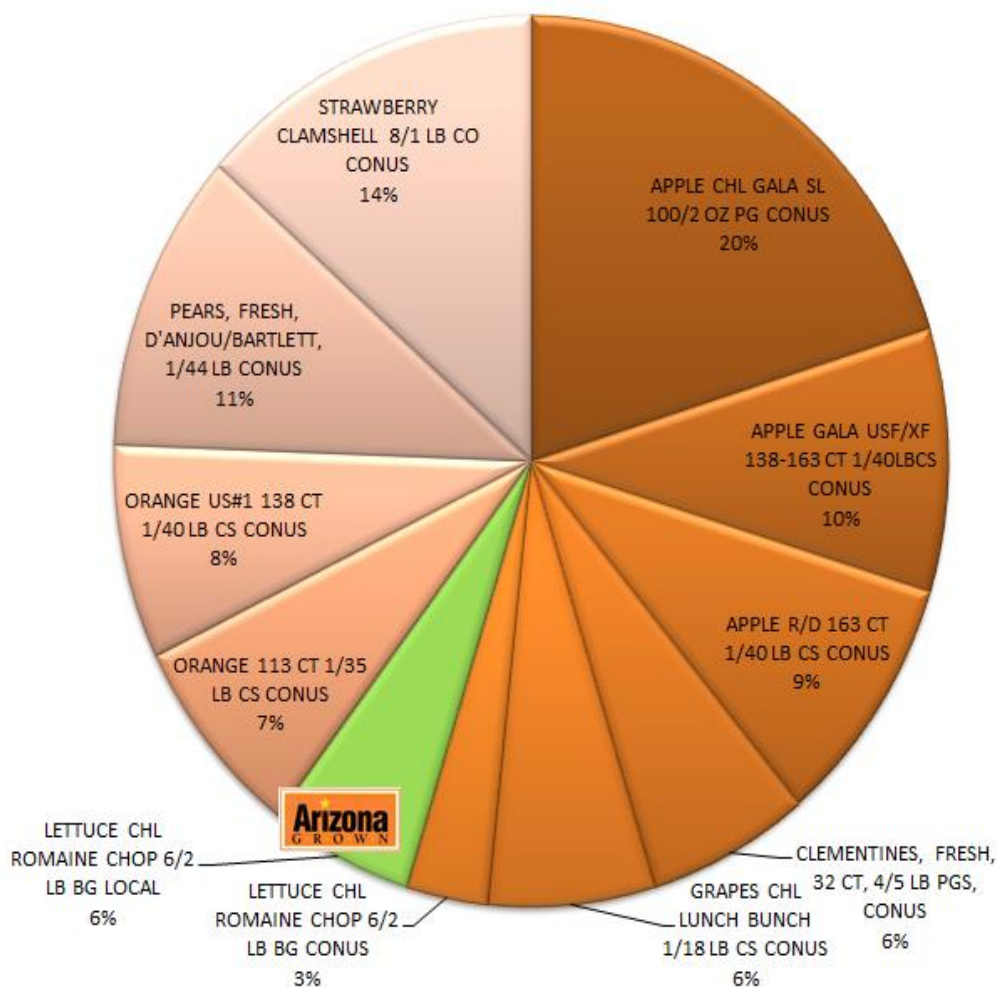
easiest way to access local produce as a means to implementing a Farm to School Program. In school year 2013, participants on the DoD Fresh Produce Program were asked to spend 25% of their DoD entitlement dollars on items designated as 'locally grown' through the FAAVORS catalog. This number was determined through responses collected in previous Arizona Farm to School surveys, where 50% of school districts who participated on the National School Lunch Program reported spending 30% or more on local produce through a variety of means. During the winter months (November – March) Arizona produces

substantial amounts of winter crops like lettuces and a wide variety of cruciferous vegetables available nationally, which would likely be reflected through the FAAVORS catalog. Overall, school districts who participated in school year 2013 directed 11% of their entitlement funding towards items designed as "locally grown." In school year 2013, Arizona received 4.5 million dollars in funding for the DoD Fresh Produce Program. Nearly \$501,000 of that funding went towards items designated as 'locally grown' through the FAAVORS catalog.

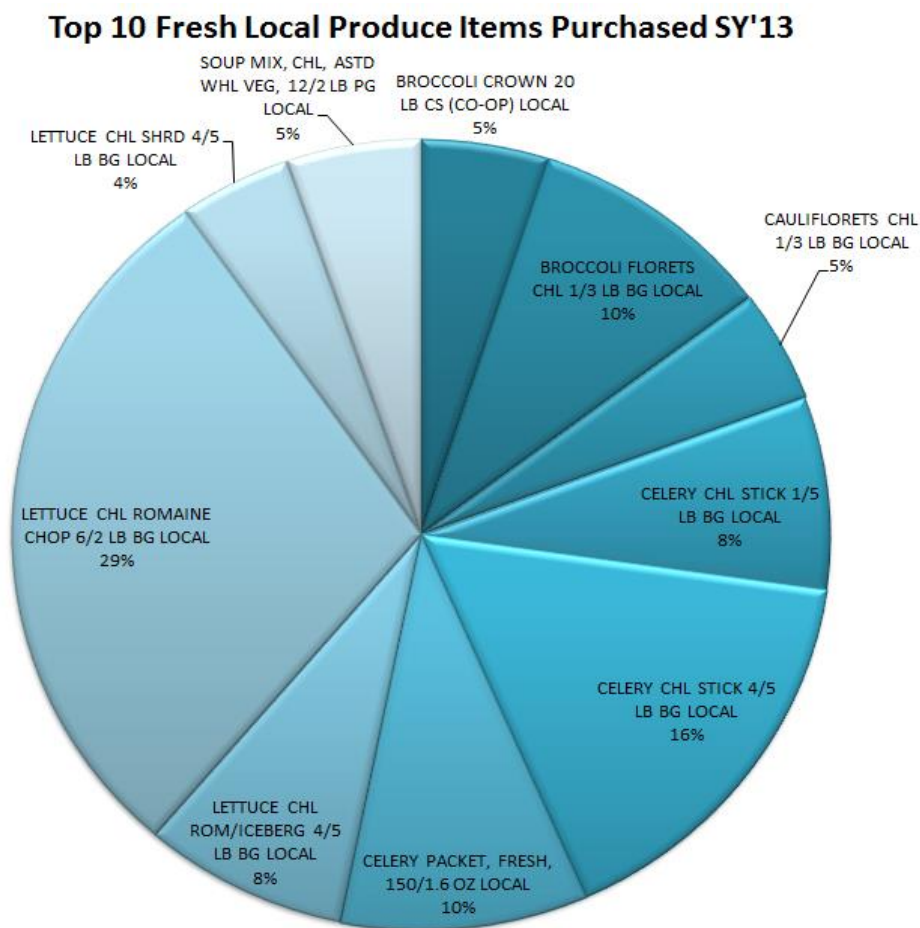
School districts who participated in the DoD Fresh Produce Program for school year 2013 may have reached various percentages of local purchasing due to three main factors; constant changes in the availability of Arizona grown supply, the cost associated with products available through the FFAVORS catalog verses contracted commercial vendors, and the time a school chooses to purchase produce through the DoD contracted vendor for SY'13, Stern Produce. As indicated by the Arizona Department of Agriculture's [Specialty Crop Guide for 2013](#), the state ranks third in the nation for overall production of fresh market vegetables. Arizona ranks second in the nation for common items found on school lunch menus such as romaine lettuce, cauliflower, broccoli, spinach, cantaloupes, and honeydews.

Top items purchased in school year 2013 were fruits like apples, oranges, pears, and strawberries. This is likely due to the cost of these produce items in comparison to contracted commercial produce vendor prices. The fruits mentioned here do not grow in Arizona in large quantities and as indicated in the graph below, were not designated as "local" in the FFAVORS Catalog. However, the romaine lettuce purchased in the highest frequency was a local option available and selected more often than its American grown counterpart.

Top 10 Fresh Produce Items Purchase SY'13



Top items designated as “locally grown” purchased in school year 2013 were vegetables like a variety of lettuces, broccoli, celery, and cauliflower. This is likely due to the low cost of these produce items in relation to the prices of these items offered from commercial contracted produce vendors. These vegetables are grown in Arizona in large quantities, especially in the winter months.



Trends in Local Purchasing throughout SY'13 centralized in the spring semester (end of January through April), when school districts tend to spend most of their DoD funding. This spending habit is typically due to the fact that schools are closing out their school year, which includes various entitlement accounts that have not been spent previously. Accounts not fully utilized by April will be swept in order to maximize efficient use of this federal funding source. In the graph below you will notice that the spending peaks are highest in the spring of 2013 as opposed to steady peaks, indicating steady spending throughout the school year.

Trends in Local Purchasing throughout SY'13

